United Nations A/54/177

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 July 1999
English
Original: French

Fifty-fourth session
Item 117 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Presentation of the Fund

1. The present annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/151 of 16 December 1981, by which the General Assembly established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

2. A description of the mandate and administration of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture is contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/387, paras. 7–11). A description of the activities of the Fund during its first decade of operation, from 1982 to 1992, is available in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session (A/48/520).

3. In administering the Fund through the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General relies on the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Fund. The Chairman of the Board is Jaap Walkate (Netherlands); the other members are Ribot Hatono (Japan), Elizabeth Odio-Benito (Costa Rica), Ivan Tosevski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Amos Wako (Kenya).

4. A brief description of the grant approval cycle will explain how the Fund operates. Grant requests should be submitted by 31 December for consideration by the Fund secretariat. Admissible grant requests are reviewed by the Board of Trustees at its annual session in May. The Board's recommendations are submitted for approval to the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General. Grants are paid out in July/August. The recipients must submit by 31 December satisfactory narrative and financial reports on the use of the grants. No new grant requests can be considered before satisfactory reports on the use of previous grants have been received.

II. Contributions and pledges

5. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In order to allow enough time for responding to the requests for financing received before 31 December each year, and in accordance with the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 15 of its resolution 53/139 of 9 December 1998, contributions should be made to the Fund well before the annual session of the Board of Trustees, to be duly recorded and made available by the time of the session. Any contribution recorded after that date is counted towards the following year. Pledges are not counted if payment was not received before the first day of the Board session.

A. Payment of contributions

1. Trends in the number of States contributing to the Fund

6. The number of States contributing to the Fund has increased from 5 at the 1982 session of the Board to 35 in 1999.

7. Subsequent to the Secretary-General's previous report to the General Assembly (A/53/283), 32 Governments made voluntary contributions to the Fund between 1 August 1998 and 2 July 1999, as indicated in table 1.

Table 1
Government contributions from 1 August 1998 to 2 July 1999[a]

Government	*Contribution (in United States dollars)*	*Year announced*	*Contribution number*
Algeria	5 000	1999	7
	5 000	1999	8
Andorra	5 000	1998	4
Belgium	82 109	1998	9
Canada	15 487	1999	16
Chile	10 000	1998	7
Czech Republic	3 000	1998	4
Finland	181 901	1999	17
France	83 333	1998	20
	81 416	1999	21
Greece	10 300	1999	16
Iceland	5 550	1999	13
Ireland	66 600	1998	14
Israel	5 000	1999	4
Italy	89 989	1998	10
Japan	66 000	1998	13
Liechtenstein	7 092	1999	11
Luxembourg	21 378	1998	15
	12 949	1999	16
Malta	1 500	1999	5
Mauritius	3 000	1999	2
Monaco	10 582	1999	6
Nepal	1 000	1998	2
Norway	64 117	1999	14
Peru	1 500	1999	2
Philippines	6 250	1998	3
Portugal	15 000	1998	3
	15 000	1999	4
South Africa	22 766	1999	4
Slovenia[b]	2 825	1998	1
Spain	50 327	1998	13
Sweden	379 747	1998	12
Switzerland	54 744	1998	11
	41 666	1999	12
Turkey	5 000	1999	1
United Kingdom	642	1999	11
United States of America	600 000	1998	17
	300 000	1997	18
	300 000	1999	19

[a] According to the information available to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

[b] A contribution from the Government of Slovenia of 2,825 dollars was officially received by the financial services of the United Nations at Geneva on 6 August 1998. The confirmation of receipt was sent to the Government on 20 October 1998. The amount will be added to the Fund in the near future.

2. Contributions from non-governmental organizations and private individuals

8. Three individual donors contributed to the Fund for the first time: Ms. C. Krebs ($50), Mr. H. I. Jamieson ($70) and an anonymous donor ($3,731). Ms. R. Maran regularly maintains her contribution to the Fund ($30).

3. Contributions received in time for allocation at the eighteenth session

9. In accordance with paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 53/139 and with the wishes of the Commission on Human Rights and the Board of Trustees of the Fund, only those contributions actually paid and officially recorded by the Treasurer of the United Nations before the first day of the annual session of the Board are taken into account by the Board for grant allocations.

10. Table 2 lists the contributions received in time for allocation at the eighteenth session of the Board, between 11 May 1998 and 16 May 1999.

Table 2
Contributions received in time for allocation at the eighteenth session

Donor	*Amount (in United States dollars)*
Algeria	10 000
Andorra	5 000
Australia	60 620
Belgium	82 109
Canada	15 487
Chile	10 000
Czech Republic	3 000
Finland	181 901
France	164 749
Germany	112 359
Greece	10 300
Iceland	11 137
Ireland	66 600
Israel	5 000
Italy	453 921
Japan	66 000
Kenya	1 000
Liechtenstein	7 092
Luxembourg	21 378
Malta	1 500
Mauritius	3 000
Monaco	10 582
Nepal	1 000
New Zealand	15 555
Norway	197 759
Peru	3 000
Philippines	6 250
Portugal	15 000
Republic of Korea	15 000
South Africa	22 766

Donor	*Amount (in United States dollars)*
Spain	50 327
Sweden	379 747
Switzerland	96 410
Turkey	5 000
United Kingdom	642
United States of America	3 900 000
Mr. Jamieson	70
Ms. Krebs	50
Ms. Maran	30
International Commission of Jurists (Netherlands section)	5 080
Anonymous	3 731
Total	**6 020 152**

B. Pledges

11. Government pledges to the Fund are made directly to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, or during the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities in New York, which usually takes place each year during the first week of November; they may also be made at the annual session of the Commission on Human Rights at Geneva.

12. The following pledges remain outstanding as at 2 July 1999:

State	*United States dollars*
Brazil	30 000
Denmark	308 166
Luxembourg	14 706
Netherlands	537 634
New Zealand	15 957
Philippines	6 345
Tunisia	2 000
United Kingdom	216 666

C. How to make a contribution to the Fund

13. To contribute to the Fund by bank transfer, in all cases, specify: "payee: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, account CH", and pay to: "United Nations Geneva General Fund" c/o Société de banque suisse, B.P. 2770, CH-1211 Genève 2, either in Swiss francs to account number 240–CO–590–160.0, Swift address: UBSWCHZH12A, or in United States dollars c/o Chase Manhattan Bank, N.Y., A/C: 001–1–508629, UNOG General Fund, G/L: UN–0503456, U.S. Banking Code: 021000021.

14. It is also possible to contribute to the Fund by check payable to "United Nations" addressed to: Trésorerie, Nations Unies, Palais des Nations, CH–1211 Genève 10, or to: Treasury, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017, United States of America.

III. Funds available for allocation at the eighteenth session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund

15. The Board of Trustees of the Fund held its eighteenth session at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 17 to 28 May 1999. In accordance with the rules governing the Voluntary Fund, 15 per cent of estimated annual expenditures must be earmarked as a reserve for the following year, and 13 per cent is the rate set for programme support costs. After reserve and support costs were deducted from the total contributions received in time for allocation, the total amount available on 17 May 1999 came to approximately US$ 5,100,000.

IV. Disbursements

Recommendations of the Board of Trustees at its eighteenth session

16. The Board of Trustees made programme grant recommendations for all available funds, i.e. $5,100,000, of which $100,000 was for emergency grants to individuals between the annual sessions of the Board of Trustees and $200,000 for urgent grants to organizations which could face financial difficulties because of delayed payment of grants from the European Commission. These emergency grants to organizations will be treated in accordance with the relevant guidelines for the Fund which have already been approved by the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.

Methods of work

17. The guidelines for submission of requests for project financing (selection criteria, types of requests received, urgent grants and others) are found in the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fiftieth and forty-eighth sessions (A/50/512, chap. IV, and A/48/520, annex I, summary by the Secretary-General of 10 years of activities).

Decisions of the Fund secretariat

18. On 11 June 1999, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General, approved the Board's recommendations on grants to 133 projects submitted by 117 humanitarian organizations in 53 countries. Paragraph 21 below lists the organizations that authorized the Fund secretariat to mention the awarding of a grant in 1999. During its eighteenth session, the Board of Trustees heard, in closed session, representatives of seven organizations. Despite the small number of regular donor States (38 out of 187 potential donors), the Board made an effort to honour every request for funding that met the selection criteria by awarding 40 to 60 per cent of the budget requested, or sometimes more, according to the cost of the treatment offered and the number of victims assisted.

19. From the establishment of the Fund until 28 May 1999, 317 files for requests for financing have been started by the Fund secretariat (the same organization may submit several projects, which may also generate a number of sub-projects).

20. At the end of its eighteenth session, the Board of Trustees held an information briefing with representatives of interested donor States to discuss its work and recommendations. A press release (see annex III) was issued on 23 June 1999 after the adoption of the Board's recommendations by the High Commissioner in time for release to the public on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

21. The following organizations received grants on the recommendation of the Board at its eighteenth session and authorized the Fund to announce its support: Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo (Argentina), ACAT (Association des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture (Mexico), ACTV (African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims) (Uganda), Aid for Children in Crisis (South Africa), AMECON (Africa War Victims Medical Concern) (Uganda), Amigos de los Sobrevivientes (United States), ASTT (Advocates for Survivors of Trauma and Torture) (United States), ATYHA (Instituto de Alternativas en Psicologia) (Paraguay), AVRE (Association pour les victimes de la répression en exil) (Paris), Balay Rehabilitation Centre (Philippines), Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (Canada), CAPSDH-Burundi (Commission africaine des promoteurs de la santé et des droits de l'homme) (Bujumbura), CAPSDH-Ghana (Accra), CAPSDH-Guinea (Conakry), CAPSDH-Rwanda (Kigali), CARITAS (Cologne), CCVT (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture) (Toronto), CDHES (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador) (San Salvador), CEDAVIDA (Fundación Social Colombiana (Bogotá), CEFPRODHAC (Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos) (Cereso de Reynosa, Mexico), CEJIL (Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional) (Washington, D.C.), Centre d'acceuil et de soins Primo Levi (Paris), Centre for Justice and Accountability (United States), Centre for Multicultural Human Services (United States), Centre for Rehabilitation of War And Torture (Sweden), Centre for the Treatment of Torture Victims (Berlin), Centre for the Treatment of Torture Victims – Ulm (Germany), Centro Alternativas (Santiago), CINTRAS (Centro de Salud Mental y Derechos Humanos) (Santiago), CODESEDH (Comité para la Defensa de la Salud, la Ética Profesional y los Derechos Humanos) (Buenos Aires), COMEDE (Comité médical pour les exilés) (Paris), COMISEDH (Comisión de Derechos Humanos) (Lima), Coordinador Nacional de Derechos Humanos (Lima), C3RJ (Consulting Centre for Constitutional Rights and Justice) (Nigeria), Cordelia Foundation (Budapest), CVT (Centre for Victims of Torture) (United States), CVT (Katmandu), Doctors of the World (New York), EATIP (Equipo Argentino de Trabajo y Investigacion Psicosocial) (Buenos Aires), Edmonton Centre for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (Canada), EXIL (Centre medico-psychosocial pour refugies et victimes de la torture) (Brussels), FASIC (Fundacion de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas (Santiago), FIND (Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances Welfare) (Philippines), FRC (Family Rehabilitation Centre) (Colombo), Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (Gaza), HAMOKED (Centre for the Defence of the Individual) (Jerusalem), HEMAYAT (Vienna), Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (Ankara), ICAR Foundation (Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture) (Romania), International Society for Health and Human Rights (London), IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) (Copenhagen), IRCT-Zagreb, Italian Refugee Council (Rome), Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (Rawalpindi and Kashmir), Justice pour Tazmamart (Paris), Khmer Health Advocates (United States), Khulmani Support Group (South Africa), LAPPH (Ligue des anciens prisonniers politiques haïtiens, des amis et parents de disparus) (Port-au-Prince), LRCT (Lahore Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Survivors (Pakistan), MAG (Medical Action Group) (Manila), Marjorie Kovler Centre for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture (United States), MEDH (Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos Humanos) (Buenos Aires), Medical Foundation (Kampala), Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (London), MRT (Estonian Center of Medical Rehabilitation for Victims of Torture) (Tartu), NIDEREF (Niger Delta Environment and Relief Foundation) (Port Harcourt, Nigeria), OMCT (Organisation mondiale contre la torture) (Geneva), Omega Health Care Centre (Austria), ONDH (Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme) (Dakar), Ottawa-Carlton Immigrant Services Organization (Canada), PCATI (Public Committee Against Torture in Israel) (Jerusalem), POC Fund (Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund) (London), PRAWA (Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action) (Lagos), Program for Torture

Victims (United States), Projecto Adelande (United States), RCTV (Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (Greece), RCVTE (Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture in Ethiopia) (Addis Ababa), RCVV (Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Violence) (Nairobi), Red de Apoyo pcr la Justicia y de la Paz (Caracas), The Redress Trust (London), Refugio-Bremen (Germany), Refugio-Munich (Germany), RIVO (Réseau d'intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la violence organisée) (Canada), Rocky Mountain Survivors Center (United States), Rwandan Women Community Development Network (Kigali), Sach Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (Pakistan), SERSOC (Social Rehabilitation Service) (Montevideo), SMRC (Latvia Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims and their Families) (Riga), SOPROP (Solidarité pour la promotion sociale et la paix, section française pour l'Europe) (Democratic Republic of the Congo), SOTI (Survivors of Torture, International) (United States), SRC (Swedish Red Cross) (Sweden), Survivors International (United States), Swiss Red Cross (Bern), TOHAV Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (Istanbul), Tortura Nunca Mais (Rio de Janeiro), Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture (South Africa), Trauma Centre in Yaoundé (Cameroon), Tripoli Centre (Lebanon), TRUSTT (Australia), Unité de médecine des voyages et des migrations (Geneva), VAST (Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture) (Canada), VAT (Voice Against Torture) (Islamabad), Victim Services Inc. (United States), XENION (Berlin), ZEBRA (Zentrum zur sozialmedizinischen, rechtlichen und kulturellen Betreuung von Ausländern und Ausländerinnen) (Austria). The Fund also gave financial support to 14 other humanitarian organizations that provide medical, psychological and social assistance or train health professionals in 1999.

V. Anticipated requirements for the year 2000

22. The demand for assistance to torture victims is constantly increasing. Over $5 million were requested from the Fund in 1996 for 96 projects and sub-projects. In 1998, $6.8 million were requested for 118 projects. In 1999, $8.2 million were requested for 139 projects. The difference between the amount available for grants and the amount requested from the Fund in 1999 was over $3 million dollars.

23. If demand continues to rise, about $10 million in contributions must be received before May 2000 to meet the need in full.

24. The next session of the Board of Trustees will take place from 15 to 26 May 2000 at Geneva.

VI. Fund-raising

25. In its resolution 36/151, by which it established the Fund, the General Assembly authorized the Board of Trustees to promote and solicit contributions and pledges. It also requested the Secretary-General to give the Board of Trustees all the assistance it might require and appealed to all Governments to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund.

26. In keeping with the programme of work it outlined in decision 48/431 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly adopts resolutions concerning the Fund in even years. Resolution 53/139 is the latest one it has adopted on the matter. The Assembly, in this resolution, and the Commission on Human Rights, in resolution 1999/32 of 26 April 1999, appealed to all Governments, organizations and individuals in a position to do so to respond

favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund, if possible on a regular basis and annually before the meeting of the Board of Trustees and, if possible, with a substantial increase in the level of contributions, so that consideration may be given to the increasing demand for assistance. The General Assembly should adopt a resolution on the Fund in December 2000, at its fifty-fifth session, following the nineteenth session of the Board of Trustees.

27. The Board of Trustees greatly appreciated that the High Commissioner for Human Rights had sent a letter on 9 October 1998 inviting States which had never contributed to the Fund to do so for the first time and a letter to States that were regular contributors inviting them to increase their support. On the recommendation of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, the High Commissioner agreed to launch an appeal to donors in autumn 1999 to make their contributions in time, i.e. before May 2000, for the nineteenth session of the Board.

VII. United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June

28. In its resolution 52/149 of 12 December 1997, the General Assembly proclaimed 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On that occasion, the Committee Against Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions relating to torture, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights adopted a joint declaration (see annexes I and II). To celebrate the Day, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized an exhibition of works by torture victims at the Palais des Nations from 21 June to 1 July and at Palais Wilson, headquarters of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, from 6 to 16 July 1999. The exhibition included around 100 paintings, posters, drawings, photographs, sculptures and embroideries sent to the Fund secretariat by some 30 organizations that have assisted such victims and their families with the financial support of the Fund (see annex IV).

29. An observance was also organized at United Nations Headquarters in New York, and many events were held around the world to celebrate the Day.

VIII. Conclusions

30. The Fund's support is vital for the organizations concerned, because sources of funding for assistance to victims of torture are limited, while more requests for such assistance are submitted each year. Ever-increasing financial support is needed. Donors wishing to contribute to the Fund are requested to refer to paragraphs 13 and 14 above for information on modalities of payment; for further information, they may also consult the Fund secretariat, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. By contributing to the Fund, States demonstrate their commitment to combating torture and their solidarity with the victims, enabling the latter to receive medical, psychological, psychiatric, financial, social, legal or humanitarian assistance and to resume a normal life. According to information available to the Office of the High Commissioner, assistance granted by the Fund in 1998 made it possible to help approximately 60,000 victims of torture throughout the world.

Annex I

Joint Declaration on the occasion of United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 1999

[Original: English]

The Committee against Torture, the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions relating to torture and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Recalling the decision of the General Assembly to declare 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture,

Recalling the appeals against torture of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in which, *inter alia*, all Governments were exhorted to defeat torture and torturers everywhere and reminded that ending torture was a beginning of true respect for the most basic of all human rights: the intrinsic dignity and value of each individual,

Recalling also the Joint Declaration that they adopted on 26 June 1998,

Reaffirming that torture is one of the vilest acts to be perpetrated by human beings upon each other,

Concerned that requests for assistance for victims of torture are constantly increasing,

Recalling that torture is prohibited by article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as by specific provisions of international human rights treaties adhered to by the majority of the States,

Recognizing that torture is a breach of a non-derogable human right which cannot be justified under any circumstances and that its systematic or widespread practice is characterized as a crime against humanity under international law, in particular, by article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

Conscious of the necessity to place emphasis on prevention of torture, as recommended by the World Conference on Human Rights of 1993,

Welcoming the organization of the VIII International Symposium on Torture as a Challenge to the Health, Legal and Other Professions, to be held in New Delhi from 22 to 25 September 1999,

Acknowledging the valuable work of Governments, associations, groups and individuals in contributing to the effective elimination of all forms of torture,

Paying tribute to all those who work selflessly to relieve the suffering and assist the recovery of torture victims around the world,

1. Decide to renew their appeal to prevent and prohibit torture on the occasion of the United Nations Day in Support of Victims of Torture of 26 June 1999, and to this end,

2. Urge all States to become parties to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment without reservation, if they have not already done so,

3. Urge States parties to the Convention that have not yet accepted its optional provisions to do so as soon as possible,

4. Call for the early adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

5. Urge all States to become parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted on 17 July 1998, as a matter of priority,

6. Urge all States to ensure that torture is a crime in their domestic law and to rigorously pursue perpetrators whenever the act was committed and bring them to justice,

7. Urge all States to provide for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of torture in their domestic law,

8. Appeal to all Governments, organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, if possible on a regular basis, keeping in mind the increasing demand for medical, psychological, social, humanitarian and legal assistance to victims of torture and members of their families worldwide,

9. Urge all States to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture in fulfilling his mandate,

10. Consider that, by these means, the crime of torture may be effectively prosecuted and condemned all

over the world and that impunity of torturers, no matter what is their status, will no longer be tolerated,

11. Call upon all Governments, other United Nations bodies, programmes, funds and agencies, as well as relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to commemorate, on 26 June, the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Annex II

United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, to be observed on 26 June

Press release issued at Headquarters on 24 June 1999

[Original: English]

The second United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture will be observed on 26 June. The Day, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 12 December 1997, aims at eliminating torture and ensuring the application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which entered into force on 26 June 1987.

Underlining United Nations efforts to combat torture, the four main actors of the United Nations engaged in the fight against torture adopted a joint declaration against this year urging all States to ratify the Convention against Torture without reservations. In the declaration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee against Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions relating to torture and the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture also urged all States parties to the Convention which had not yet accepted the treaty's optional provisions to do so as soon as possible, so that individuals who claim to be victims of a violation of the rights protected by the Convention can submit complaints for consideration by the Committee which monitors its implementation.

The joint declaration calls upon all States to ensure that torture is considered a crime in their domestic law and to rigorously pursue perpetrators. It also urges States to become parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a matter of priority. Under article 7 of the Rome Statute, torture is one of the acts constituting a "crime against humanity" when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack. Also, according to article 8 of the Statute, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, is one of the acts constituting a "war crime".

In addition, all States are urged to provide for compensation and rehabilitation of victims of torture in their domestic law and to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture as fully and as often as they can. The declaration adds that all States should cooperate with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture on fulfilling his mandate when requested to do so.

Since its creation, the United Nations has worked to eradicate torture. In 1984, the General Assembly adopted the Convention against Torture, which obliges States parties to make torture a crime and to prosecute and punish those guilty of it. It notes explicitly that neither higher orders nor exceptional circumstances can justify torture.

As of June 1999, the Convention has been ratified by 114 States. These States parties are required to report to the Committee against Torture, a human rights treaty body set up in 1987 to monitor compliance with the Convention and to assist States parties in implementing its provisions.

The Committee is composed of 10 experts who serve in their personal capacity and are elected by States parties.

The Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on torture also plays a key role in the international fight against torture by requesting Governments to submit information regarding alleged cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment that he receives from various sources, including individuals, and by reporting to the Commission. In 1998, the Special Rapporteur — Sir Nigel Rodley, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland — transmitted 122 urgent appeals to 41 countries on behalf of persons whose physical/mental integrity was reportedly at risk, as well as 64 letters to 59 countries on behalf of hundreds of alleged victims of torture.

Torture is one of the most profound human rights abuses, taking a terrible toll on millions of individuals and their families. Rape, blows to the soles of the feet, suffocation in water, burns, electric shocks, sleep deprivation, shaking and beating are commonly used by torturers to break down an individual's personality. As terrible as the physical wounds are, the psychological and emotional scars are usually the most devastating and the most difficult to repair. Many torture survivors suffer recurring nightmares and flashbacks. They withdraw from family, school and work and feel a loss of trust.

Thirty years ago there were no treatment centres or services to treat torture survivors. Today, there are some 200 centres or programmes all over the world. There is now profound knowledge of torture methods, the effects of torture and how to diagnose and rehabilitate torture victims.

Over 100 programmes treating torture victims in more than 50 countries, from the United States to Nepal, receive funding from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, which was established in 1981.

From 1983 to July 1998, the Fund financed 300 projects, including those providing medical, psychological, legal, social, financial, humanitarian or other assistance to victims of torture and members of their families, as well as projects for training for health, social, psychological and other professionals working directly with victims of torture. In 1998, the Fund received applications for financial support totalling $6.8 million, but only $4.2 million was granted owing to insufficient donations. This year, the Fund received requests for grants in the total amount of more than $8 million. Some $5.1 million will be granted to organizations supporting victims of torture.

As part of the commemoration of the Day, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Copenhagen-based International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims are organizing an exhibit in the public lobby of the General Assembly building, which will run until the beginning of August. The panel exhibit, which includes paintings and children's drawings, was inaugurated last year and describes the history and ongoing prevalence of torture, United Nations documents and mechanisms for combating torture, consequences of torture, rehabilitation and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

Annex III

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approves grants to organizations supporting victims of torture

Press release issued at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 23 June 1999

[Original: English]

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson has approved, on behalf of the Secretary-General, grants amounting to $5.1 million to organizations supporting victims of torture.

These grants were recommended by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture at its eighteenth session which was held in Geneva from 17 to 28 May 1999.

The Board had received requests for grants which came to more than $8 million.

Grants were allocated to about 130 organizations providing medical, psychiatric, psychological, social, economic, legal, humanitarian or other assistance to victims of torture and members of their families from all over the world.

The Board also recommended grants to organize training for health professionals, social workers, psychologists and other professionals.

It has been estimated that about 60,000 victims and members of their families were assisted in 1997 through the support of the Fund.

As compared with 1998, the Board noticed an increase of more than $1 million in requests for grants for 1999. However, following appeals made by the High Commissioner and then by the General Assembly (resolution 53/139), several donor Governments increased the level of contributions paid, so that consideration might be given to the increasing demand for assistance. The main donor to the Fund in 1998, the United States, doubled its contribution which amounted to $3 million this year.

In order to take into consideration the increasing demand for assistance, it has been estimated that applications for new grants for the year 2000, amounting to $10 million, should be received by the deadline of 31 December 1999. New voluntary contributions should also be received before the next session of the Board of Trustees in May 2000.

Detailed information will be available in the Secretary-General's annual report on the Fund to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (last report A/53/283).

Pending publication of the above-mentioned report, for any details, please contact the Fund's secretariat at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Support Services Branch, Trust Fund Unit, telephone (41.22) 917.93.15, fax (41.22) 917.90.7, e-mail: dpremont.hchr@unog.ch.

Annex IV

Works of art by torture victims to be exhibited on the occasion of International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Press release issued at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 18 June 1999

[Original: English]

In commemoration of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 52/149 of 12 December 1997, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are organizing an exhibition of works of art created by victims of torture.

The exhibition will be held at the Palais des Nations from Monday, 21 June, to Thursday, 1 July. The works will also be shown at the Palais Wilson from Tuesday, 6 July, to Friday, 16 July.

The exhibition is made up of 135 works of art by torture victims from around the world, gathered by 32 organizations which work in 27 countries. These organizations are financed through the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture which provides medical, psychological, social, juridical and humanitarian aid to victims of torture or members of their families.

The paintings, sculptures and tapestries were created, on the most part, during sessions of artistic therapy which are organized within the framework of the rehabilitation of the victims and represent a way to express the suffering endured or to show the positive effects of therapy.

At the Palais des Nations, the exhibition will be held at the Salle des Pas Perdus. The Palais Wilson, which is the seat of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, is at 52 Pâquis street, Geneva.